RITUALS OF TRANSFORMATION

IN

MEGAN TERRY'S

COMINGS AND GOINGS

A STUDY

By

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Contents



The folowing study takes for its focal concem the assumption that feminist drama generaly and Megan Terry's particularly pivot around the concept of ' transformation, which constitutes their dominant theme and technique . This type of theatre, it is argued, overtly asserts its direct engagement with and struggle for the issue of social transformation. Its leading exponents -Caryl Churchill, Megan Terry, Michelene Wandor, Marsha Norman, and others - have set themselves, each in her distinctive way, the task of turning the theatre into a tool of social change with the aim of raising and developing women's critical consciousness. In such theatre urgent female concems and issues are critically discussed and analysed, with the aim of alerting the audience to the socio-cultural roots of ' gender roles' and ' subjectivity ' through such female issues like sexual oppression, economic subordination, social subjugation, and the fight for autonomy.

Terry's theatre is characterised by the centrality of ' transformation' (Marranca et al. 183) . These transformations and their attendant strategies of theatre games and role-playing and role reversal

help bring out and develop the main shift in the drama: from 'self-recognition' (woman as object and the recognition of oppressions) to ' self-transformation' (woman as "subject" and the attainment of autonomy). In most of her plays certain change-ridden tensions and transitions occur to characters before the audience's eyes.Cumulatively, this leads to the transformation of these people, their context, and their theatrical roles. This centrality of transformation, both as theme and technique, is recognised by Helne Keyssar, who states that "In Terry's plays we witness a sustained development of transformation as the central convention of feminist drama at large" (1984,54).

Also related to this transformaion process and ensuing from it is the dramatic connection set up between "theatrical roles" on the one hand and "social roles" on the other. The aim in view is to demonstrate to the female audience how stereotypical theatrical and, by extension, social roles can get transformed by dismantling their cultural roots.In this sense Terry turns the theatre into a tool of politicising women's consciousness as a

precondition for working collectively to attain "autonomy".

But before embarking on the analytical examination of the selected texs, it would be appropriate to define certain key terms in this study:"role", "autonomy", "ideology" and "oppression". Gerda Lerner provides a definition of "oppression":

> The term oppression, meaning forceful subordination,
> implies victimization ... The word focuses on a wrong .... it implies a power struggle, a defeat resulting in the dominance of one group over the other (233).

This definition, which stresses the power basis of the oppressor/opressed relationship, is perfectly in line with the main thrust of this study. Such terms as 'forceful subordination', 'victimization', and 'dominance' intersect with one of the predominant themes in Megan Terry's transformation plays, namely, that of "dominance-submission". Terry's female characters are usually outsiders; people struggling to keep their in-

dividuality in a system which pushes them to conform to the oppressive status quo. In this sexist context, male characters, the progenitors and staunch custodians of the system, tend to subjugate, intimidate, and, by implication, victimise female characters.

The question which immediately arises is :Why is it necessary for women to transform this situation and to attain their autonomy ? In The Female Experience, Gerda Lerner gives adefinition of "autonomy":

> This process of creating feminist consciousness has something, but by no means everything to do with the quest for women's rights, equality and justice- it has a great deal to do with the search for autonomy . Autonomy means moving out from a world in which one is born to marginality, to a past without meaning, and a future determined by others.... into a world in which one acts and chooses, aware of a meaningful past and free to shape one's future (xxiv).

What is worth stressing here is that women's attainment of autonomy, that is, their emergence from 'marginality',passivity, "immanence and otherness" (de Beauvoir,639), into full self-determination, dignity, "liberty and inner metamorphosis"(de Beauvoir, 639)--this attainment is conditional on women developing and exploiting a critical socio-cultural consciousness based on women's need to transform their irrationally imposed gender-based social roles.

The other major term used in this study is'role'. According to Elizabeth Janeway, a role implies a relationship which, in its turn, connotes a syndrome of characteristics and tasks(72). This syndrome of female features Janeway tends to call women's"societal condition of inferiority". For her, it is"a whole set of traits and attitudes and ways of presenting themselves which we think proper to women, along with the obligations and restrictions that it implies" (47). This condition with its concomitant role syndrome, Janeway further adds, provides a focus and stability in the face of changing conditions. Thus we can say that

woman's societal condition has taken on a socio-cultural or rather ideological character.

Michele Barrett states that this concern with the moulding social power of culture is a central contribution of the women's movement to the theatre, which, according to her, "takes the form of ideoogy" (in Newton et al. xix). Barrett defines ideology as "a system of representation through which we experience ourselves" (xx). This definition implise the fact that one's subjectivity is socio-culturally constructed. For feminist writers this disquieting awareness of the social construction of subjectivity and gender roles is of crucial importance to the emergence and success of the transformational mode of play-writing with its emphasis on the interdependence of the 'personal' or 'domestic' and the 'polittical' or 'public'. It is worth pointing out here that this catalysing awareness is practically translated and demonstrated in one of the important slogans adopted by feminists in general and feminist playwrights in particular, i.e. "The personal is political" (Millet,70). For Jalna Hanmer, "The personal is political" is an epistemological stance on how the world is to be understood and changed".

This stance, she goes on to say, is not simply concerned with individual experience of femininity or masculinity in interpersonal relationships, "but with a broader canvas, that of social structure" (445).

This inseparability of the "personal" and the "socio-political", which is an essential characteristic of feminist drama, has led to "the politicisation of sexuality" (Keyssar, xi). Michelene Wandor, a leading feminist dramatist and critic, attests to this fact when she states that "The politicisation of sexualitty" has implications for contemporary theatre in general. Further explaining she says:

> ....at its core is the conviction, derived from the specifics of women's oppression, that there is no detail, however small or intimate, of social and individual life, which does not have a wider political meaning, and is therefore subject to change. The resurgence of feminism has introduced

new questions about the relationship between the individual and his /her society and the nature of political change, and it is from this source that we might see a new definition of political subject matter for the theatre (1986,7).

What is significant about this theatrical insight is the stress laid on what used to be dismissed as extremely 'feminine' or rather trivial. For feminist writers, the theatre--a potentially shaping socio-political force--could and should be used as a catalyst for speeding up the potential process of transformation. Again it is Michelene Wandor who recognises this catalysing role of the radical theatre:

Theatre and berformance skills of all kinds have always
played a role during periods of social and political change
in Britain. All political movements have used theatre and

> music to express and support their struggles, and radical
> social change has also affected the avant-garde wings of
> theatre, which are always receptive to new ideas (9).

In a similar spirit, Terry gives what might be considered as her definition of 'women's theatre', or rather what she conceives to be the function of her theatre . She sees theatre as that art from "that gives women confidence, shows themselves to themselves, helps them to begin to analyse whether it's a negative or positive image, it's nourishing" (in Keyssar 1984,33-34). The theatre is thus entrusted with the basic task of instructing its female audience socio-politically, of providing them with certain historical as well as topical insights, which are a prerequisite to developing their critical social consciousness. It follows, then, that Terry puts at the centre of her theatre not, as in the Aristotelian theatre, a 'recognition scene' but rather a series of transformation scenes. In Terry's theatre, self-recognition seems to take place offstage,while what is enacted on stage is

meant primarily to bring out and develop a persistent, though fragmented, process of transformation. Consequently, Keyssar singles out transformation as the distinctive feature of this type of dramaturgy. She writes:

> More important than these distinctions, however, is the
> relentless appearance in these plays of the strategy of
> transformation, the theatrical manifestation of metamorphosis of contexts, actions and, most crucially, of characters. In contrast to most of the drama of the last two hundred years, feminine drama does not rely on a recognition scene as the pivot of its structure (xiii).

Attesting to the same view, Marrance et al. state that Terry's work in the theatre is mainly characterised by her use of 'transformation'.They go on to define 'transformation' as "a non-psychological action and image-oriented conception of character which negates the notion of a fixed reality or situation in favour of the continu-

ous displacement of one reality with another" (183).

Cohn recognises the complexity of this approach and the implicit challenge it poses for the actors and actresses who work with it. She states that this type of drama broadens the actors' skills, since he/she has to shift sex, age,class or even enact a lifeless object"(69). The emphasis here is on the notion of changeability, on the central idea that nothing in human life is fixed or absolute. On the contrary, everything is relative and, therefore, transformable.

Even in psychoanayticaly oriented feminist plays, the self is not seen as well-defined, stable and hidden, but as fuid, shifting, alterable and admirably but problematically varied. Nor is the world, in which characters take abode, reassuringly unified and solid, but it has rather become fragmented and diversified. In transformation drama, the performer and, by extension, the audience can take on any identiy; he/ she assumes one role to dispose of it right before the audience's eyes and adopt another.

Such transformathion moments and scenes are the dramatic equivalents of the characters'

pressing need for change. "If one's goal as a playwright is to inspire radical alterations in human actions," says keyssar, "then the 2500-year old dramaturgical fixation on the recognition scene might well be viewed as a prison" (1984, 59). "Transformathion", asserts Terry, "reveals to us an efficient universe. Nothing is lost--it's just transformed" One of the early aims of Terry's theatre was to crash some barriers for women" Such theatre rotates around women, their ambivalences, tensions, conflicts, and struggles, and it "takes as a central convention the overt display of people becoming other-- people transforming" (Keyssar 1984, 59).

Instrumental to the development of the transformation play were the transformtion exercises created by a Chicago artist and teacher, Viola Spolin (Marranca et al., 183). The theatre games of Spolin's daily workshops and the work of Nola Chilton-- acting strategies based on "games" and "role-playing"--

> meshed perfectly with Terry's vision of a theatre in which actors created and altered the world in front of the audi-

> ence, relying on their own resources of body, voice, and imagination (Keyssar 1984, 55).

These theatre games together with some other dramatic representational devices, such as sex-role reversal, the satire of sexual stereotypes, the creation of historical role models, music, and the creative use of language are combined in such a way as to create Terry's theatre of transformation. In this theatre, language, for example, is turned into a catalyst of change, where identities, roles, and contexts become transformed onstage. "Terry's words," says Keyssar, "function as physical action, as mediations that gradually change the people who speak and the relations between them (1984, 56-7).

Megan Terry's plays are practical implementaions of her concept of transformation drama, but it is her two major plays Comings and Goings (1975) and Approaching Simone (1977) which are the perfect representatives of this transformational form. They are, therefore, selected here for a close analysis by focusing on the theme and technique of transformation. But as Terry's

one-acter Ex-Miss Copper Queen on a set of Pills (1966) marks a partial shift from conventional theatre, I will briefly try to point out the transformational elements in it. It is meant to function as sort of a preface to the intended close textual analyses of the selected two major transformational plays.

Ex-Miss Copper Queen represents three "marginal" women, who are trying to the best of their abilities to give meaning to their otherwise meaningless life. But significantly enough only one of them--Miss Queen--is an embodiment of a dramatic transformation. It is in the dramatic structure and narrative elements of her life story that the transformational mode is suggested. The tale she recounts is one of continual shifts, of abrupt transitions, of decline from riches to rags. Miss Queen here demonstrates an identity that is in continual flux; she is elusive and unfixed in any history or type. It is this "image-oriented conception of character" and its concomitant process of "the continuous displacement of one reality with another" --as mentioned above in this study--which give this play its transformation character.

This transformational character is further un-

derscored by certain catalytically metamorphosing acts in the play. Basic among such actions and the one that is central to the development of the theme of transformation is the three women's determination to have access to public work against all odds. Within their 'reifying' social context, their collecting garbage (the women as scavengers) is symbolically meant to serve as a freeing and rehumanising act (163). The value of this menial work is much more appreciated when we realise that the only alternative course of action available to women in this oppressive community is 'whoring'. Hence, the play opens with Miss Queen as 'a call-girl', 'a common sex-object' (162). Alternatively, salvaging items of value from the garbage is demonstrated to be dramatically transforming.

The main point to be made here is that work and its relation to women are being redefined. It seems here that Terry subscribes to de Beauvoir's view of work as a rehumanising public activity. De Beauvoir holds that economic autonomy is the precondition for the destruction of woman's "otherness and immanence" (639). But what aborts this rehumanising effect in the play is the pres-

ervation of the context of marginality in which the three women exist (173).

Terry's next play, Comings and Gomings (1975), is often hailed as the first truly American transformational feminist drama. It represents the transformational form in all its aspects. Significantly, Terry calls it a "theatre game" (7). Indeed, this play falls in a series of about thirty successive transformations; from the outset to the finale we are presented with various fragmented ways in which He and She (the only characters in the play), or rather man and woman, relate to each other : emotionally, sexually, economically, and socially. Significantly, Terry--in a Note prefacing the play--describes Comings and Goings as "a trampoline for actors and director" (2).

Both the title of the play and the above "trampoline image" suggest the agility of the actors' movements, the swift shifts of scenes, and the multiplicity and variety of theatrical roles and identities; He and She are even called upon to become inanimate objects : a plug and a socket, two galaxies, etc. (23). Also they frequently reverse their sex-roles. Such theatrical activities and strategies make up and punctuate the transformational

character and form of the play.

Structurally, Comings and Goings is presented as a collage of tension-ridden scenes, of abrupt transitions and transformations. "Most of these transformations," says Keyssar, "exploit a gesture or emotional beat to allow the passage of the actress from one role to another." (63). These transformations function as the objective correlatives of the internal feelings and ideas of the characters involved; they symbolically serve, among other things, to dramatise and externalise their pressing need for role and self transformation. Thus, they are the theatrical devices and images that, cumulatively, help bring out and develop the dominant theme of transformation.

This is brilliantly done all the play through; it is done in tems of both its fragmented actions and transforming dialogue, so that by the end of the drama Terry has brought the audience "to accept persistent change in the bodies, voices and roles of each character" (Keyssar, 64).

Instrumental to the success of the playwright in putting across her transformational message, or rather developing her pivotal theme, is the use of such theatrical strategies as sex-role reversal, the

satirisation of stereotypical female images, and the creation of more positive models. For example, by directly portraying and satirising female stereotypes in oppressively sexist situations, Terry manages to raise a key issue in feminist drama, namely, that power most frequently resides with men. In the play this power relationship between man and woman is dramatised as the domination-submission theme The words used in the following exchange, besides serving as a theatrical tool of transformation, help bring out this theme of traditional male aggressive supremacy:

> **He:** You stupid woman driver, do you know what you've done to my car? What are you--drunk or something? The curse?... By the time I get through with you, you'll be behind bars for the next ninety years. (He opens her car door, still holding to one of her shoulders, and drags the terrified woman from behind the wheel. She is numb and in a state of shock)
>
> **She:** It's raining. It's dark. It's raining (10).

This scene picks up on a variation of the same theme : the gender-based superiority of the male versus the female. This recurrent theme extends to underlie all the scenes in the play--be these scenes of domestic or puplic concerns. But it is worth stressing that Terry seeks to challenge this assumption and to have it transformed. At the outset of the play, He and She are involved in a domestic scene where the issue of gendre-based distinctions and roles come out clearly :

> She : Put down that gun and help me with these dishes.
> He : I'm not finished cleaning it.
> She : You're always cleaning that dangerous weapon in my clean kitchen.
> He : Where else should I clean it? You set me a good example of how to clean a kitchen.... (8)

One of the undertones of this exchange is that work in society is divided on a gender basis. 'Setting him an example of cleaning the kitchen' suggests that her work is predominantly confined to the domestic field and to housework. By im-

plication we understand that man's labour is exclusively in the public arena, that is, production and politics. Women automatically become housewives simply because they are females. This recalls the gender-based role syndrome, which assigns to woman certain social roles that are in prefect accord with their biological traits and ideas about and attitudes towards themselves. This is called 'woman's societal condition', which is diagnosed as one of 'inferiority'. And it is exactly this myth of woman's inferiority which all feminists attempt to dismantle and transform. One theatrical way of coping with this mission is the technique of sex-role reversal.

Throughout the play the stage directions suggest that scenes be repeated and sex-roles reversed : "Repeat this scene three times with the actors reversing roles" (8). Through scene-repetition and its attendant role-shifting, which are used as a theatrical frame, the play emphasises women's and men's need for role transformation and self-metamorphosis. Towards the middle of the play, for example, He and She are involved in a traditional situation of dinner rituals. But what

happens is by no means orthodx. On the contrary, it is quite innovatively transformational. He and She, or rather "costumer and waitrees", play this scene "in five different ways ranging from casual transaction to sexual encounter" (Marranca et al. 86). So, they naturally come to exchange sex, roles, identities, and language connotations. All the component parts of this scene fluidly shift, creating real possibilities of transformation. The scene :

> (At dinner--He orders breakfast, Matter-of-fact.
> She's waitress, casual) (15)
> --------------------.

> Immediately they exchange roles :
> (Master-Slave. Waitress is Master.)
> She now assumes the role of master and or-
ders
> while the man takes the order :
> She : Orange juice.
> He : Yes
> She : Squeesed.
> He : Yes.

The scene unfolds showing the female char-

acter in full control of the situation.
The stage direction then reads : "Repeat above scene three times" (17).

Thus, we can say with Keyssar :

> Comings and Goings ... is a play about role definitions and role change which relies on theatrical transformations to move the play forward. Each of the mini-scenes presents a moment of encounter between two people, in which the tension of change, of coming and going, is central. Individual control over the scene is a crucial issue of content as well as performance (65).

The play, in the final analysis, provides an image that assarts the inseparability of gender, social roles, and the dominant socio-cultural context. Besides this, it calls into question the rigidity of individuals' perceptions of and assumptions about themselves as men and woman. At the basis of this argument is Barret's idea of the socio-cultural roots of the construction of the in-

dividual's subjectivity. The play thus can be seen as a critique of and an ass ault on our much cherished attitudes, deceptions, and practices. All this is done with the ultimate effect of satirising and transforming sex stereotypes and their concomitamt gender-based social roles.

Terry's next play Approaching Simone (1967) is a unique play due to its positive depiction of a modern historical figure who is struggling for her indiviual liberation. The play is fundamentally a dramatic presentation of Simone Weil, the french philosopher and martyr who chose to starve herself to death in "1943 at the age of thirty-four" (Marranca et al., 189). "The role of Simona," says Ruby Cohn," combines two types--philosopher and saint" (66). Thus, the implication of Simone's character is that it articulates two complementary needs--one is to understand the world around her and the other is to try to reform or rather transform it.

This accords with Terry's main motivation behind writing this play, namely, to place before her female audiences a positive model of a heroic female protagonist who represents the growth and

development of women's critical consciousness and their struggle for lifting oppressions and attaining autonomy. As Terry says, the aim of the play is to show Simone's heroic personality and her inspiringly uncompromising resolution to be treated as an independent human being with a free will (in Keyssar 1984, 63). Terry in this play seems to be adopting Charles Fourier's civilisational perspective in relation to women's question which is based on the idea that the level of human civilisation should be measured by looking at the condition of women. Fourier states :

> Social advances and changes of periods are brought about by virtue of the progress of women towards liberty, and the decadences of the social order are brought about by virtue of the decrease of liberty of women.... To sum up, the extension of privileges to women is the general principle of all social progress (in Gide, 77).

It is in a similar spirit and armed with a similar civilisational consciousness that Simone

fights against a dehumanising sexist world, represented by such social institutions, as the family, education, and marriage, in order to attain autonomy. In the course of the play, Simone is shown militantly, but fruitlessly, struggling against all forms of oppression : objectification, subjugation, marginality, otherness, immanence, and inferiority.

The play opens with Simone's childhood. As a child, she carries heavy burdens (just like her brother), darns stockings for the poor, and refuses sugar lacking to soldiers. The implication here is that Simone refuses to be treated as a baby doll, or a child without brains. She seems intent on being looked upon as a consciously responsible human being. The following exchange points to Simone's seminal social consciousness:

Mother :My dearest children where are your stockings ?

brother :We gave them away.

Simone : The workers'children don't wear

stockings, and niether do I (12).

She further tells her mother that she is "mailing my sugar to the soldiers at the front.. " But why ? " wonders her mother. And Simone retorts, " They don't have any " (13). Thus, right from the start, Simone's need to see the world reformed is highlighted. As the folowing extracts demonstrate, scene by scene and transformation by transformation, the play builds up to Simone's rebellious acts and oppositional experiences. But she is shown pitted against the odds;whatever happens to her and however hard she tries to liberate herself, the final experience is one of frustration. Cumulatively, she becomes desperate and considers suicide at the age of fourteen, but she survives it :

> Simone is alone in her room with the wet cloth. As her pain and anguish build, aspects of her self-doubt, self-loathing, and pain and anguish appear to torture her (16).

The following excerpt points out dramatically that the above negative feelings, which arise out of a sense of 'inferiority', have their roots in sexual discriminstion :

One : You have no talent, Simone.
Two :You're stupid Simone.
Three : You're awkward, Simone.
Four : Not only is your body miserable, but your
mind can't move either.
Five : You'll never match your brother, Simone...
Six : You're nothing but a girl, Simone..
You're unfit foor this world, Simone .
Kill yourself Simone.

But "As the singer sings, Simone is drawn back to the will
to live. She slowly rises,"

SINGER:
ANYONE CAN KNOW TRUTH
DESIRE, DESIRE
ONLY MAKE THE EFFORT OF ATTEN-

TION
FOCUS ON THE DARK INSIDE OF
YOUR HEAD
UNTIL IT LIGHTS YOUR WAY(17-19).

This elaborate catalogue of the components of Simone's "inferior status"dramatises the idea of the socio-cultural construction of her subjectivity.Simone, just like all her fellow females, is gender-socialised. Due to her "societal condition of inferiority", Simone is conditioned in such a way as to "subordinate [her] natural talents to men." Likewise, this subordination, Janeway goes on to say, is indicative of woman's 'inferior status' in society(74). Irrationality, weakness, thinness, otherness, separateness, indecisiveness, and objectification are some of the constituent traits and attitudes of this status.

In Approching Simone Terry aims at laying bare and satirising this iriational process of gender socialisation and, eventually, having it trasformed. Hence,Simone, with her nascent consciousness, demonstrates her critical and oppositional attitudes and rebelious acts, even as child.

Similarly, as an adult, Simone is still involved and enmeshed in the same unjust and dehumanising sexist society, where she is discriminated against and objectified. Twice in the play she is sacked from her teaching profession. In answer to th question "Why is she always fired?", the board 'male' members state the following charges :

> The board finds that you are not paying attention to the board :
> You smoke.
> You had the effrontery to print the student's work?
> You are fired (39)

The same situation is re-enacted in another school later in the play:

> "Simone at a new school."
> Board members sort of iterate the same charges : You have been noticed to smoke and read and not pay atention at teachers' meetings. You are hereby fired for in-

subordination and endangering the lives and moral attitudes of your pupils. You are hereby separated form us. uh fired, uh terminated.

Simone reacts in a typically rebellious way :

Simone (walking and smoking) M-m-m-m-m-m-m

It is the condition of my teaching (43).

Such irrational and absurd accusations recall the objectified female characters portrayed in Caryl Churchill's Vinegar Tom (1982), who are condemned to be evil witches in travesty trial scenes. They were accused of witchcraft mainly because of their rebllious and unorthodox acts : choosing to live without men, healing other women, and insisting on living not as brainless objects but as free human beings. For such 'crimes', those women were chased, arrested, and turned into objects of horror in their misogynist society.

Obviously in such feminist drama, women are first objectified and then victimised for no crime other than being born females in a sexist society. As Keyssar puts it, "Women are victims of

male oppression, scapegoats for the failures and impotences that men cannot acknowledge as their own" (1983, 212). In this irrationally de-humanising context Simone and her fellow oppressed females are faced with two alternative courses of action : either to succumb to their objectification and its concomitant oppression or act rebelliously to the extent of willed martyrdom. Actually, Simone opts for the second re-humanising, though physically annihilating, alternative. From childhood onwards, Simone has demonstrated an uncompromising attitude of rebelliousness and her apparently disruptive activities and progressive ideas have always antagonised the various male-dominated communities in the play.

Linguistically, the whole drama is a piece of transformation discourse. The language used in the play accentuates the shifts and alternations Simone dialectically undergoes--between moments of self-denial and self-assertion : Simone oscillating between vulnerability and strength; the swinging between Simone as "Object" and Simone as "Subject". Again, this helps the pro-

motion and development of the pivotal theme of transformation.

Equally remarkable in this connection are the strikingly effective visual images delineated by the ensemble. For, they also help bring about Simone's self-creation (i.e. creating new social roles) and her own self-destruction or rather her catalysing self-sacrifice, which is here perceived as the only channel available for her apparently paradoxical self-realisation in this highly sexist society (71).

Also the use of music and songs contribute to the dramatic functioning of the above dialectical frame; they enhance the theme of transformation in terms of theatre roles and personae as well as context and language.

Stylistically, the architectural and episodic nature of the play lends itself well to a 'biographical' and 'historical' drama. Here the private as well as the public, the personal and the political, the 'epiphanic' and the ordinary moments of Simone's fragmented life, are equally emphasised and developed in a crescendo leading to her suicidal starvation.

Structurally, the play takes the form of a collage, where shifts of character, contexts and theatrical roles (according to Simone's different stages of life and critical consciousness development) provide a disrupted frame appropriate for the episodic nature of Simone's life in the play. This is demonstrated throughout the play in scene after scene and exchange after exchange, where Simone's roles keep shifting and transforming.

Also the cast is made to function in such a way as to assume the character of a catalyst facilitating the shifts and transformations in Simone's life. The cast constitutes an ensemble that repeatedly transforms into personae from Simone's both internal and external lives, thus juxtaposing moments of conflict, suffering, hope and despair. For example, in Act II the entire cast appears on the stage to lift and caress Simone's body, which is "racked with both physical and spiritual agony" (93). Each character in the cast removes and puts on a piece of Simone's clothing. For me, this dramatic gesture suggests, among other things, the social conditioning and structuring of the individual's experience. The whole

tableau evokes Simone's construction as well as destruction of her 'socialised self'. This meaning is visually underscored at the end of the act, and play, when the ensemble vanishes and the "Pin spot" of light on Simone is "dimming slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly to black" (98).

This fading to black prepares the audience to Simone's imminent suicide, which, paradoxically enough, comes as the culmination of her socially disruptive acts. In this connection, Ruby Cohn sums up the movement of the drama in terms which emphasise Simone's triumphant rebelliousness more than her despair and suicide :

> Act I might be called the abjuration of self, with act II the immersion in community --a union acivist in her factory, a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, a Christian inspired by the poems of George Herbert, a Jewish refugee in Marseille, a participant in Harlem gospel services, and finally a London volunteer for the Free French during the Second World War. Assigned to cerical work rathar than the dan-

> gerous mission she requests, Simone starves herself to death, refusing food as she once refused suger unavailable to her compatriots (66).

But in point of fact, Simone's suicidal act is an act of desperate rebellion.

However, this tragic note of suicide and wastefulness with which the play ends is indicative of Terry's ambivalence towards the central issue in her plays. Just like her Simone, she dedicates herself and her life to the cause of terminating woman's oppression and her attainment of autonomy. But again, like her heroine, she lets this revolutionary moment get aborted. This is demonstrated in he play by the fact that the conflict is resolved in the interest of the oppressively sexist forces dominating the play from the outset to the finale. In other words, despite its positive implications, suicidal starvation is suggestive of the perpetuation and consolidation of the oppression of women and their ultimate victimisation.

But as Terry has made clear right from the start, her aim is simply to put on the stage ex-

emplary female characters--positive historical models--who dare to think critically, act rebelliously, and resist their irrationally misogynist culture irrespective of the results.

Actually, it is in the potentiality of critical thinking, rebellious consciusness, and collective participation that the message of Terry's theatre can be best appreciated and understood. For Terry, women, being the victims of 'male oppression', should arm themselves with critical consciousness in order to attain their autonomy. Until this desired state of autonomy is realised, women need to pull together so as to eliminate their male-imposed oppressions. As de Beauvoir succinctly puts it :

> All oppression creates a state of war .... Indeed the struggle between them (man and woman), cannot be clearly drawn, since woman is opaque in her everything, she stands before man not as subject but as an object paradoxically and endued with subjectivity ... She makes weapons at once of her weakness and of her strength .... man

> becomes indignant when he treats her as a free and independent being and then realises that she is still a trap for him ... whatevew he does, he feels tricked and she feels wronged (196).

It is this historically negative image of woman as "object", woman as 'inferior' to man, that Terry sets out in her plays to change and restructure into a more positive one. But she perceives change not in terms of radically transforming the oppressively sexist context of the social structure at large, but rather in terms of transforming the oppressor/oppressed relationship between man and woman, and its underlying irrational ideas of sex inequality, gender-based social roles and the oppressions they spawn. In her theatre, she seems to be arguint that only when radical changes occur to both gender and its concomitant sociat roles, only when both men and women identify and tolerate each other's meeds, desires and differences, only then can equality and autonomy be attained. The final pronouncement on Terry and her limited revolutionary vision comes from Keyssar :

> For more than twenty years, Megan Terry has illuminated the lives of American women through her drama. Although she is a critic of sexism, violence, materialism and social corruption, her work does not call for a radical revolution as much as it calls attention to the enormous strength she perceives in women, especialy in the ability to will transformations. Hers is explicitly not a Marxist understanding of culture or society; in a distinctly American fashion, she protests inequality and injustice but does not analyse society in terms of class and economic opression (75).

Such being the case, it can be said that Terry's is fundamentally a theatre of "will transformation". Although it is a theatre of muffled social protest, it is basically a theatre of becoming; that is, of individuals becoming others onstage before the audience's eyes. Becoming here is understood in an existential sense. As Jean-Paul Sartre expounds, people become free and have free wills only when they cease to be mere objects in the realm of "being-in-itself"--of subordination, ob-

jectification, and oppression -- and willingly move into the realm of "being-for-itself" -- of autonomy and free rehumanising 'praxis' (735). In other words, what makes us really human is our possession and practice of a consciously critical will and its ever-developing attendant need to understand the world and, hence, transform it. For women, this critical consciousness is turned into a weapon of change--from a state of marginality and objectification into one of autonomy.

Significantly enough, this conscious will-transformation is at the centre of Terry's theatre. No wonder, then, that one of her professed objectives is to help women develop their critical conscipousness, by showing them through her plays how to turn it into a tool of will-transformation. As such, hers is a theatre which incorporates a vision of futuristic civilisational change. In other words, socio-political transformations can materialise and gather momentum until, cumulatively, a surplus of individual will transformations leads to social change. In this sense, Terry's transformational drama provides one possible paradigm of social critique.

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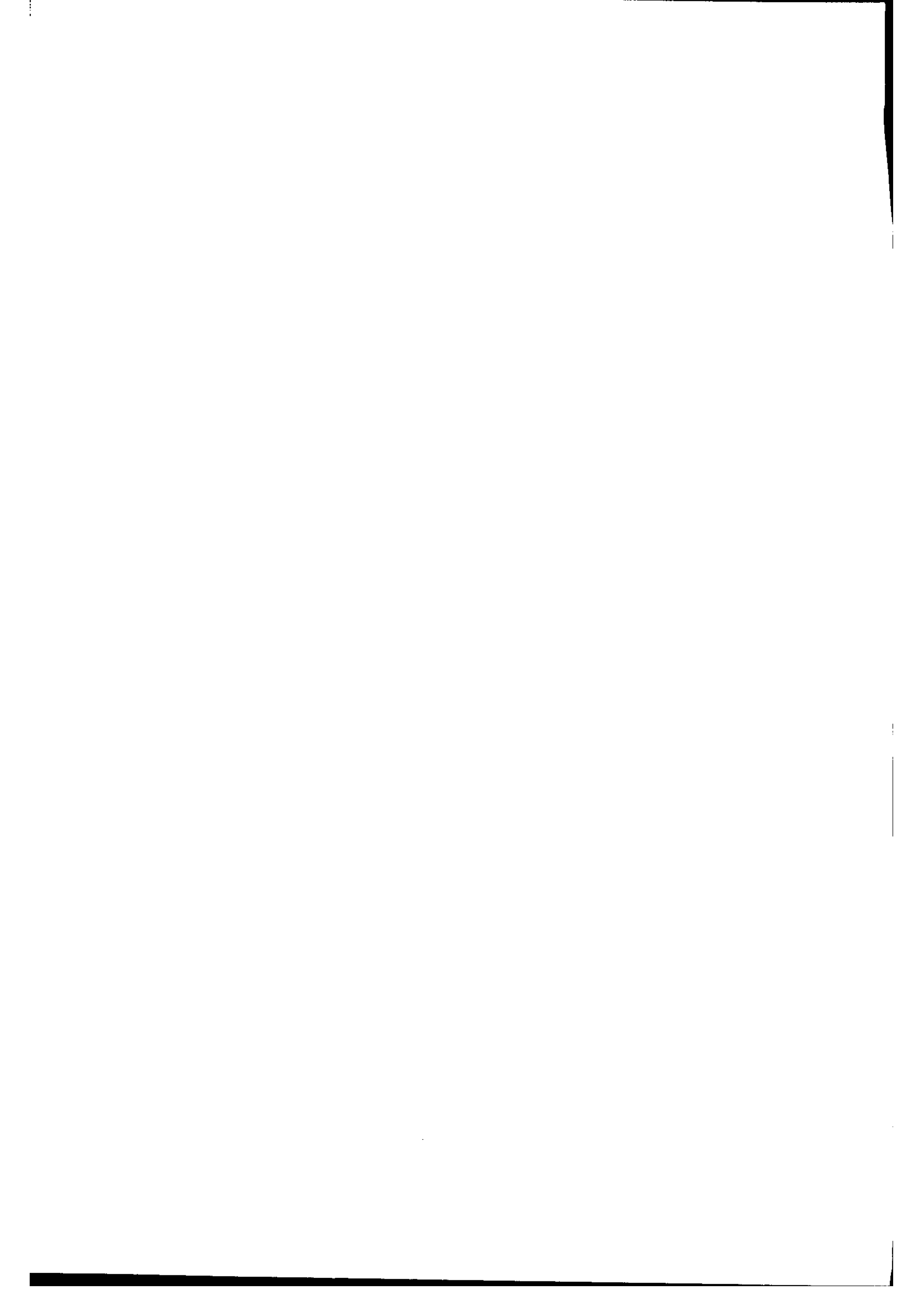
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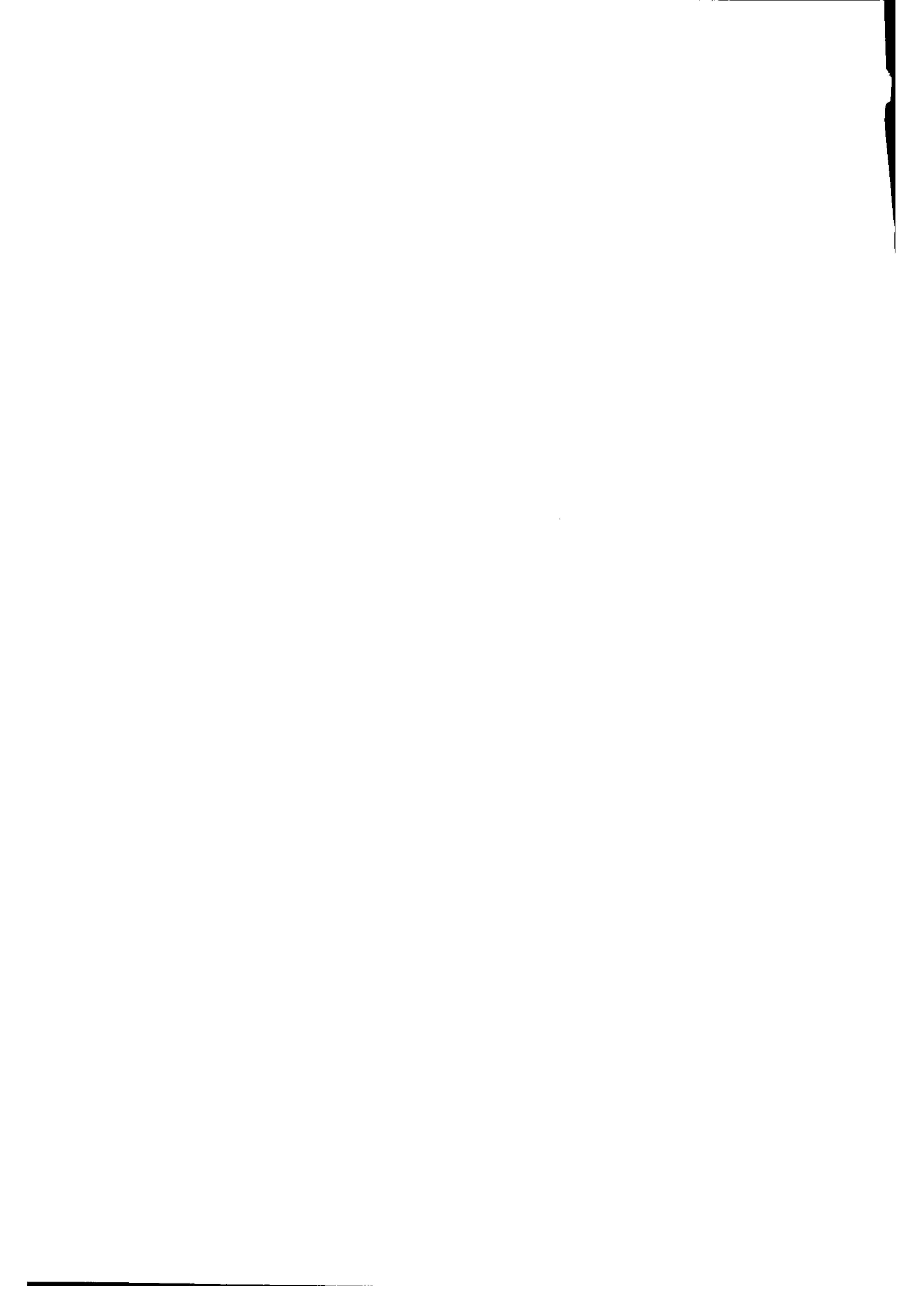
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COMINGS

AND

GOINGS



A Theatre Game

(A man and a woman rise from a bench, walk to stage center, and settle themselves. SHE curls up, more asleep than awake.)

HE : (Alert and threatening): Touch me.

SHE : In a minute.

HE : Now.

SHE : In a minute.

HE : It's morning.

SHE : In a minute.

HE : It's time.

SHE : IN a minute.

HE : I'm leaving.

SHE : In a minute.

HE : Touch me.

SHE : In a minute.

HE : I'm leaving now.

SHE : In a minute.

HE : Goodbye.

SHE : No.

HE : yes.

SHE : in a minute.

HE : Minute's up.

SHE : No.

HE : Now.

SHE : (getting up) : O.K.

(Repeat this scene three times. All the scenes are to be transformed one into the other without pause.)

(A kitchen)

SHE : Put down that gun and help me with these dishes.

HE : I'm not finished cleaning it.

SHE : You're always cleaning that dangerous weapon in my clean kitchen.

HE : Where else should I clean it ? Where else ? You set me such a good

example of how to clean a kitchen I naturally think it's the best place to clean the damn gun.

SHE : Don't you dare swear in my clean Kitchen.

HE : You Just swore in your clean kitchen.

SHE : I never did no such thing.

HE : Double negative, double negative.

SHE : (Washing dishes) : You can be so aggravating. God !

HE : There you did it again.

SHE : You don't give me a moment's peace.

HE : But that's all I want from you. (He pats her fanny.)

SHE (Slapping him with the dishcloth) : Stop that, you dirty old man.

HE : I am your dirty old man. Your very own, very dirty old man. Come here. You want to clean me? Come on and clean me good. (He hugs her and she responds, laughing.)

(In their clinch they change to a faulty plug in a wall socket.)

SHE : What's wrong ? I feel you've slipped.

HE : It's my left prong. The screw hole's stripped, I think.

SHE : Your lamp's blinking .

HE : I know. I know. The whole thing will blow out if that jerk don't put down his newspaper and screw it back in.

SHE : Not hime again. He's so inept.

HE : She's better.

SHE : She can hold a wratchet at least.

HE : Can you give me more juice ?

SHE : Don't be unintelligent.

HE : Can't you do something ?

SHE : I can be constant, that's something.

(HE starts to shake her. HE's pulling her out of a car. It's raining and they're on a curve of the highway at night.)

HE : You stupid woman driver, do you know what you've done to my car ? You shouldn't be driving. What are you - drunk or something ? The curse ? What excuse can you give me, can you give God ? Do you know what's under that crushed door in the suicide seat of my car? We were

taking a ride in the rain. My mother likes rain. I'm going to make you see her . I'm going to make you look at her. By the time I get through with you, you'll be behind bars for the next ninety years. (HE opens her car door, still holding on to one of her shoulders, and drags the terrified woman from behind the wheel. SHE's numb and in a state of shock.)

SHE : It's dark. It's raining.

HE : It's raining. It's beautiful. Why didn't you open your eyes ? Do you have a license? I bet you don't have a license. How could you be allowed to drive? I wasn't going more than thirty-five.(He pulls her close) Ahhhhrg, you've been drinking! Disgusting. It's too much.

SHE : It's my birthday . It's raining.

HE : (propelling woman toward his car, he forces her head down to look at mangled body of his mother) : There ! That's what you've done, you - you - you miserable !

SHE : Oh my God ! Oh my God! She's still holding on to her purse. She's still holding on.

HE (Pulling her oround) : I'm going to make you know what it feels like to have your face crushed in. (He forces her down onto the road and is about to jump on her head.)

(HE becomes a pencil writing a list. She is the list as HE writes it with his body.)

SHE : Take car to be greased.

Pick up shirts

Check on George.

Go to Joe's workshop.

Plan the next five years.

Get new underpants.

Mail letters on way home .

Stop at Roger's to get the key.

Check on Mozart Masses.

Attend Mr. Jordan's funeral.

Take car to be greased. (HE topples over to land beside her.)

(In bed in early morning)

SHE : Honey ?

HE : Arhgghhhh.

SHE : Alarm.

HE : Grrrrrr.

SHE : Get up.

HE : Uhhhhhhhhhhh.

SHE : Get up.

HE : Ghhhhhh.

SHE : Get up.

HE : Fuck it.

SHE : Not now.

HE : Arghhhhh.

SHE : Honey ?

HE : O.K.

SHE : Honey ?

HE : O.K.

SHE : Alarm.

HE : O.K.

SHE : Get up.

HE : O.K.

SHE : Honey ?

HE : O.K....(He leaps straight up in the air)

(A living room. HE paces, SHE sits.)

HE : I don't know why you expect so much. What more do you want ? What else can I do ? I'm here. I'm here

with you. What else can I do that I'm not doing ? What is it ? I can't make it out. You don't tell me, yet - you want. You want. I can feel you crouched there inside that mound of you. And I know you want. But I don't Know what it is that you want. What is it ? Do you want it? Do you ? You don't know what it is I'm talking about, do you ? You don't - do you ? And you sit there and you want. You want,

you want. And I stand here, and I don't know what it is that you want, you want . I stand here, don't I ? At least I'm here with you. Look? See ? Your man is here. Right here, see ? Two arms, two legs, only one head, just like everybody else. Yet , you want. I feel that tug in you. Where do you want me? What do you want of me? Backward and forward, You want !

(SHE cries.)

HE : That's what you wanted ? That's what you wanted ? That's all you wanted. Cry ? That's too easy. You can't get out of it that way. It's another trick to get me off the track. I'm going to find out if it takes me the rest of my life. I'm going to find out wat it is you want. Do you hear me ? I'm going to find out if it takes me the rest of my life ... The rest of my life ! (SHE begins to smile a tiny smile to herself.)

(SHE rises to face him. Their bodies and faces take on kabuki-like attitudes. The banal lines should be intoned with whining but amplifed sounds as if calling to the dead.)

HE : Where are you going ?

SHE : To wee-Wee

HE : Good girl. When will you be back ?

SHE : When I finish.

HE : Good girl. Bring me a cigarette.

SHE : In a minute .

(They change exact positions.)

SHE : Where are you going ?

HE : Bowling with the boys.

SHE : Good boy. When will you be back ?

HE : When I finish.

SHE : Good boy . Bring me a cigarette.

HE : In a minute.

(Repeat above scenes three times. Then they relax into postures of American Indians in a cave.)

SHE : Morning Star ?

(SHE smiles weakly.)

HE : Mine.

SHE : Hot.

HE : Morning Star. (Caresses her face.)

SHE : Cold.

HE : Morning Strokes her hair.)

SHE : Hot.

HE : Food ?

(SHE shakes her head.)

HE : Love ?

(SHE nods.)

: Morning Star. (HE sits near her and puts his blanket around them both).

SHE : Hot.

HE : Mine.

(A diner - HE orders breakfast. Matter - of - fact . SHE's the waitress, casual.)

HE : Orange juice.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Squeeze yourself ?

SHE : Yes .

HE : Two fried eggs.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Sunnyside up.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Bacon.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Three pieces.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Not too well done.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Toast.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Two pieces.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Buttered.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Hash browns.

SHE : Yes.

HE : with onion.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Coffee.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Dark.

SHE : Yes .

HE : Water.

SHE : No.

(Breakfst at the diner. Master - slave. Waitress is master.)

SHE : Orange juice.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Squeezed.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Two fried eggs.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Sunnyside up.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Bacon.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Three pieces.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Not too well done.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Toast.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Two pieces.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Buttered.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Hash browns.

HE : Yes.

SHE : With onion.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Coffee.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Dark.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Water.

HE : No.

(Breakfast at the diner. Master - slave. Customer is master.)

HE : Orange juice.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Squeeze yourself ?

SHE : Yes.

HE : Two fried eggs.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Sunnyside up.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Bacon.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Three pieces.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Not too well done.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Toast.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Two pieces.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Buttered.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Hash browns.

SHE : Yes.

HE : With onion.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Coffee.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Dark.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Water.

SHE : No.

(Breakfast at the diner - Automation . Both behave like pre - programmed robots. Square gestures, equal space between words, and perfectly equal time between question and response.)

SHE : Orange juice.

HE : Yes. Squeeze yourself ?

SHE : Yes. Two fried eggs.

HE : Yes.

SHE : Sunnyside up.

HE : Yes. Bacon.

SHE : Yes. Three pieces.

HE : Yes. Not too well done.

SHE : Yes. Toast.

HE : Yes. Two pieces.

SHE : Yes. Buttered.

HE : Yes. Hash browns.

SHE : Yes. With onion.

HE : Yes. Coffee.

SHE : Yes. Dark.

HE : Yes. Water.

SHE : No.

(Breakfast at the diner - bliss. Customer and waitress have symbiotic ecstatic relationship. Played with quiet warmth and secure joy)

HE : Orange juice.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Squeeze yourself ?

SHE : Yes.

HE : Two fried eggs.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Sunnysideup.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Bacon.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Three pieces.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Not too well done.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Toast.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Two pieces.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Buttered.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Hash browns.

SHE : Yes.

HE : With onion.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Coffee.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Dark.

SHE : Yes.

HE : Water.

SHE : No.

(HE leans on her as they struggle forward.)

HE : We've walked miles.

SHE : Only a bit more.

HE : Give me some water.

SHE : We're out.

HE : I can't move.

SHE : Yes. Only a little way yet.

HE : Leave me here.

SHE : No.

HE : My stomach aches.

SHE : It'll stop.

HE : Farther?

SHE : Only a bit.

HE : Can you see?

SHE : Yes.

HE : How much ?

SHE : Enough. There, just there, a little beyond.

HE : Thirsty.

SHE : Me too

HE : Kiss ?

SHE : One. (A brief kiss.)

HE : How much farther?

SHE : Only a bit.

(They fall asleep standing in place).

(Waking up, still standing in place.

SHE : Honey . . .

HE : Mmmmmmmmmmm.

SHE : Love you . . .

HE : Good girl . . .

SHE : Really love you . . .

HE : My doll . . .

SHE : Honey ?

HE : I'm here.

SHE : I hate you to leave me.

HE : Is it the alarm ?

SHE : Sorry, darling.

HE : Not your fault.

SHE : Angel, hold me one more time.

HE : One more time.

SHE : One more time.

HE : One more time.

SHE : Till tomorrow morning.

HE : Till tonight.

SHE : Lover ?

HE : Tonight.

SHE : Tonight ?

HE : You better believe it.

SHE : Bye bye, baby . . .

HE : Honey ?

SHE : Now .

(They assume a kabuki posture and SHE starts to move away from him.)

HE : (Kabuki voice):Where are you going?

SHE : (Kabuki voice) : To wash the clothes.

HE : Good girl. When will you be back ?

SHE : When I finish.

HE : Good girl. Bring me a cigarette.

SHE : In a minute.

(They walk toward each other and collide. They pick each other up, threaten with arms and feet, then turn and walk away.)

SHE : Where are you going ?

HE : Crazy, Wanna come along ?

SHE : Good boy. When Will you be back ?

HE : When I finish.

SHE : Good boy. Bring me a cigarette.

HE : In a minute.

(They change exact physical places and stances with one another, asking each other casually, " Where are you going? Where are you going ? " Then they intone : " Crazy wanna

come along ? Crazy, wanna come along ? ")

(A kitchen.)

SHE (Her back to him) : I know you're here.

(HE smiles.)

SHE : I know you're here.

(HE approaches)

SHE : My back's shivering.

(HE smiles.)

SHE : I feel lighter. I know you're here.

HE : I've been gone a long time.

SHE : It doesn't matter.

HE : You've waited ?

SHE : What else ?

(He smiles.)

SHE : You're here . All of you're here.

HE (Embracing her) : We're here.

SHE : Let me turn away again.

HE : Why ?

SHE : I want you all around me.

HE : Like this ? (Encircles her from behind.)

SHE : Oh yes . Yes. Yes. Just like this. Yes.

(HE picks her up and holds her aloft. HE puts her down and smiles. SHE picks him up, holds

him aloft, then drops him. HE falls and stays on the floor).

HE (The rich man, Luke 16:19.In hell in torment): Father Abraham, have mercy upon me . Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame .

SHE (as God) : Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day : and Lazarus a beggar was laid at

your gate full of sores. He asked only to be fed with the crumbs which fell from your table; moreover, you fed him not, but moreover, your dogs came and licked his sores, but now he is comforted here (heaven), and thou art tormented . And besides all this and moreover, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order, moreover, that those who would pass from here to you may not be able to,

and none may cross from there to us.

HE : I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house. For I have five brethren; so that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment .

SHE : They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

HE : Nay, father Abraham; but if some one went unto them from the dead they will repent.

SHE : If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded even though some one has risen from the dead.

(They rise and raise their hands above their heads. They study their hands. They lower their hands and look at them . They fit their hands one into the other. They look at each other. They pull their hands apart and the man and woman lace their hands together. They look down at

their interwoven hands. They look into each other's eyes. Still with hands locked, HE leads her to a chair and seats her. Then their hands break apart. He pats her shoulder.)

(We are now in a police station.)

HE : There now. Pull yourself together. It isn't as bad as all that. Stop crying, for God's sake. I'll just phone your husband, and we'll try to get this straightened out.

SHE (Alarmed at word husband) : No, don't call him. Wait, yes, do call him. I did it for him.

HE : You mean your husband put you up to pulling the robbery?

SHE : It's his fault. It's all his fault. The lazy buzzard.

HE : You mean he wouldn't do it himself?

SHE : Wouldn't do nothing for himself. I still have to cut his veal steak for him. After forty years of marriage, he still hasn't learned to cut the meat on his own plate.

I cut it into tiny cubes, " bite size, " he says . But still he don't say thank you. No, not once. Not one thank you in forty years of marriage.

HE (Filling out report form) : Now, how much money did you get ?

SHE : Almost two hundred.

HE : I have to know the exact amount.

SHE : A hundred eighty - five dollars. I got that from the Jay Hacock Mutual Life.

HE (Fast and angry - a technique) : Were you also the hooded bandit who robbed the Murcury Loan Company of five hundred dollars on February twenty - eighth at four - thirty P.M ?

SHE : Don't shout at me.

HE : Sorry, ma'am. Just doing my job. This robbery you pulled was a lot like the one at Murcury.

SHE : What's murcury ?

HE : I want you to identify the items I'm going to show you. The matron

removed thenm from you when we brought you in .

SHE : Where's my gun ?

HE : I can't let you have it .

SHE (Pitifully) : It isn't a real gun

HE : It's evidence and belongs to the state.

SHE : What ever am I going to tell Stanley ?

HE : Stanley ?

SHE : My grandson, Stanley. He belongs to the track team, and that's the gun they use to start the races. He'll never forgive me.

HE : Please, ma'am, if you'll just pull yourself together and identify these things, I'll let you call Stanley to explain.

SHE : I'll try.

HE : Have you ever seen this black hood before?

SHE : Of course, I put it on in the washroom, before I went and robbed the insurance company. That's where I left my white hat.

HE : If you hadn't left that hat, we'd never have found you.

SHE : I don't care. Just wait till he gets home from work .

HE : Is this jacket . . . ?

SHE : Who'll cut up his meat in tiny cubes tonight, huh ? Who do you think will do it ?

HE : Is this Jacket yours ? Are these black slacks yours ?

SHE : Yes . I bought them at our church rummage sale so you couldn't trace the labels .

HE : Where's the money ?

SHE : Wat money ?

HE : The hundred eighty-five you got away with.

SHE : Oh, that ?

HE : Did you hide it in your home ?

SHE : Now, that would be pretty dumb !

HE (Intimately) : If we get the money back, the judge will go easy on you.

SHE : I don't want special treatment . Tell them to lock me up and swallow the key.

HE (Fast and angry) : Where's the dough ?

SHE : I won't tell .

HE : Please, lady, what'd you do with it ?

SHE : I gave it away.

HE : You risked grand larceny to give the money away ?

SHE : I put ten dollars in the hand of every bum on Third Avenue.

HE : The shit you did ! Er, excuse me, ma'am.

SHE : Mister. When my hsband comes to the station house, do you think, would you mind - I mean I'd like to borrow your handcuffs to wear for our interview. I know he'll carry on and try to hug me.

But I want to be wearing those handcuffs so I won't have to hug him back .

(A night club.)

HE (A comedian at a mike) : So these fuzz busted me and dragged me to the local jug. And the judge lays the rap on me, see. And he says to me I'm obscene, see. He says to me I'm obscene, that I talk dirty. That I talk sexy and arouse the aroused, that I don't know what I'm talking about, see, but if I

didn't know what I'm talking about, how could I arouse all those dead dongs, see ? And like the whole time I'm fishing my pocket for my pocket mirror and I gets it out and flash it at him, see. And I yells this is my sex detector Tester, see. And like he's nearsighted and I shove it right into his chops and I says, "If you're confused about sex," I says, I shove this here mirror right up to his whiskers, and the

nose hairs of his nostrils tickle the top of the glass. And I says to him I says, "If you're confused about sex, yer honor, then hold this down to your crotch (unzipped, of course), and see if it'll mist up the glass. And if it don't, call in the friremen, cause you need a shot of novocaine in yer balls." And then he says to me . . .

SHE (Drunk) : Go on home, yer mother's calling your mouth for soapysuds, dirty little boy.

HE : And then he says to me. . .

SHE : Out ! With soap. Whyn't someone wash that loud mouth out with soap. He don't drink . He's too young.

HE : Will someone lay that broad in the mouth so that I can continue my dissertation ?

SHE (Jumping up with glass) : I'll do it myself. You mother !

HE (Keeping mike between him and woman) : You get pimples that way, lady.

SHE (Trying to hit him) : Stand still so I can put a stop to you.

HE : Husband ? Husband of this drunk. Get up here. Your wife is making an ass of you.

SHE : Come here, you dirty rotten two -bit little East - side snot-snarf. I can teach you a lesson, if I could just reach you.

HE : Back to your table, cow pie.

SHE : Greaseball.

HE : You're so sloppy you have to home permanent your snatch.

SHE : Bastard, bastard.

HE : Beast, beast.

SHE : Bugger.

HE : Bug.

(They become galaxies sending radio signals to each other.)

SHE : Bleep Bleep. (She moves in steady orbit.)

HE (Moving in a faster, more irregular orbit, sometimes slow, sometimes like a dervish, always in opposition

to her rhythm) : Blink blink blink .

SHE : Bleep blink bleep blink bleep blink blink.

HE : Blink, blink, bleep bleep blink bleep bleep blink.

SHE : Bleep bleep blink blink bleep.

HE : Blink blink blink blink bleep blink blink bleep.

SHE : Bleep bleep bleep blleep blink bleep bleep blink .

HE (Slowing) : Blink bleep blink.

SHE : Bleep blink bleep.

HE : Bleep bleep.

SHE : Blink blink

HE : Bleep.

SHE : BLINK.

(They come abreast and salute. they are members of a cub scout troup.)

TOGETHER : " . . . and to the republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and jiustic for all." (They put their

hands like goggles over their eyes and sing) :

Up in the air, junior Birdmen,
Up in the air upside down,
Up in the air, Junior Birdmen.
With your shoulders to the ground.

(Chanting) :

It takes five wrappers,
Four box tops.
Three pop sticks,
Two bonbons,
One thin dime.

(Singing) :

Up in the air, Junior Birdmen,

Up in the air upside down,

Up in the air, Junior Birdmen,

With your shoulders to the ground.

(SHE looks far away, as if out to sea. SHE gestures to him to look too. HE comes close to her, and very slowly they sink to the floor and SHE pulls him on her lap and holds him as if he is a small boy.)

SHE : Once upon a time when we lived on the beach we were hungry. You

dug us a clam. You put the clam shell on a rock studded with white barnacles. We hid in a tide pool and waited for the sea gull to dive, feet first, at the clam.

zzzzzssssssssssssssss

sssss, down came the gull and got the fat clam then dropped it from above and split the fat clam in two. We ran screaming to the rock and fought the sea gull for the fat juicy clam. And then we sat in the sand and ate and ate

and ate and ate till the clam juice ran into our bellybuttons. That was the best clam we ever had.

HE : The best.

SHE : the absolute best.

(HE pulls away from her, still crouching . They both pull blankets around them Indian style. They're huddling under a lean-to . It's cold.)

SHE : Red feather.

HE : Mmmmmmmmm.

SHE : Red feather .

HE : What ?

SHE : Why are you silent ?

HE : What is there to say ?

SHE : Red feather ?

HE : yes.

SHE : Say it.

HE : Say what ?

SHE : You want to go away from me.

HE : Maybe.

SHE : So go.

HE : In a while.

SHE : Then I'll go.

HE : All right.

SHE : Keep well .

HE : You too.

SHE : The sun is out .

HE : At last.

(SHE is arriving home after a long absence.)

SHE : Dad ?

HE : Who . . . is it . . . Sharon ?

SHE : Yes .

HE : Sharon.

SHE : Yes .

HE : It's been a long time.

SHE : It doesn't seem like it now.

HE : (Looking at her face, pointing out some tiny lines) : You didn't have this one, or this one or that one.

SHE : I know.

(HE pulls away.)

HE : Didn't get much fishing done. Water was too high this year, swept away all the eggs. Fish had a hell of a time trying to spawn too.

SHE : You sound the same.

HE : You don't.

SHE : How's the family ?

HE : Same as ever.

SHE : You seem younger. I mean, you haven't changed.

HE : I guess not .

SHE : What is it ?

HE : Eyes watering, that's all.

SHE : Can we take the boat out ?

HE : Why, sure. Why, sure we can.

SHE : Let's go .

HE : Now ?

SHE : Why not ? It's been a long time.

HE : The tide's right.

SHE : Let's go.

HE : Like old times.

SHE : Like old times.

(Abedroom. SHE is packing and HE unpacks her things as SHE packs them .)

HE : You're not leaving this house.

SHE : I can't help it .

HE : What do you mean you can't help it ?

SHE : I can't . I can't help it .

HE : Of course you can help it . You can stay.

SHE : No.

HE : Don't say that. You can't say no to me . Not after all we've been

through together . You can't walk out on me . We've survived everything , everything . You can't take that away. You can't leave.

SHE : I've got to .

HE : I forbid it . I forbid you to leave my bed.

SHE : That's why.

HE : That's why ? That's why what ?

SHE : You're smothering me.

HE : You ! I'm smothering you ! Me ! What about me ? I'm the one

who's been smothered around here, but I survived. I survived.

SHE : I can't help it . I'm sorry, but I can't stay.

HE : You're going to stay.

SHE : I can't . I can't help it .

HE : You're going to help it. You're going to face it . You're staying here.

SHE : I'm not.

HE : You are .

SHE : You disgust me.

HE : Big news.

SHE : You disgust me !

HE : And you know what you do to me ?

SHE : I'm getting out .

HE : Not without me, you're not.

(HE picks her up and carries her to a rock near the ocean. HE wants her to give him a feeling of permanence. Repeat this scene three times.)

HE : Have you known me long?

SHE : Yes.

HE : How long .

SHE : Long .

HE : How long.

SHE : Your eyes have green flecks at the center.

HE : How long ?

SHE : Your nose has a small dimple here.

HE : Will you know me long ?

SHE : Yes .

HE : How long ?

SHE : Long .

HE : How long ?

SHE : You have tufts of fur on your shoulder blades.

HE : You can never leave me.

SHE : I won't .

HE : How can I be sure ?

SHE : You can be sure.

HE : How ?

SHE : The bones of your feet remind me of dinosaurs.

HE : You do know me.

SHE : Yes.

HE : You do !

SHE : I do.

HE : You have known me .

SHE : Yes, it has been long.

HE (Comforted) : You know me.

SHE : I know you .

(Jubilant, HE takes her hand and they leap to their feet and run with a leaping step to an open grassy field . This is based on a polka, a dance of joyous courtship.)

HE : Inside.

SHE : Outside.

HE : All around.

SHE : Up and down.

HE : Turning .

SHE : Gliding .

HE : Inside.

SHE : Outside .

HE : Right along.

SHE : Galloping .

HE : Jump.

SHE : Catch me.

HE : Sweet.

SHE : Hard.

HE : Hold on.

SHE : Tight.

HE : Upsadaisy.

SHE : Inside.

HE : Outside.

SHE : Shall we go in ?

HE : Right away.

SHE : Inside ?

HE : IN !

(All the actors join together for the final scene . This should be carefully staged and played warmly to the audience. It is to be sung and gracefully danced.)

HE : Haven't I met you somewhere before?

On the steps of Elsinore?

At the film of Eleanor ?

Just inside the Barbary Shore ?

SHE : No, no no, I don't think so,

Although I'd like to slip with you behind the door.

HE : What more, what more, what more
Could any man ask of a new maid ?

SHE : Then shall we slip,
Then shall we dip.
Into a love time,
Travel to a hot clime ?

HE : What more, what more, what more
Could any man ask of a new maid ?

TOGETHER :

Then we'll dip.

We'll slip,

We'll glide,

We'll hide.

We'll slide

Into love time,

Into love time,

Into love time.

Then we'll dip,

We'll slip,

We'll glide,

We'll hide.

We'll slide

Into love time,

Into love time,

Into love time.

love time,

love time,

love time.

Love time,

INTO LOVE TIME !

CURTAIN